



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



# Mapping women's small-scale fisheries organizations in Uganda: results from assessing current capacities, gaps and opportunities to strengthen women's organizations in the sector

## Applying the handbook

in support of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines  
for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries  
in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication



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Required citation:

Smith, H. 2022. *Mapping Women's Small-Scale Fisheries Organizations in Uganda: Results from assessing current capacities, gaps and opportunities to strengthen women's organizations in the sector*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8498en>

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ISBN 978-92-5-135719-4

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# Overview

To support sustainable food systems and nutrition in sub-Saharan Africa, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) provided funding to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to support project activities in five countries – Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda – with a focus on strengthening women's roles in post-harvest processing and trade. Around the world, women perform essential work throughout small-scale fisheries food systems, yet much of this work is overlooked. Where women are not seen or acknowledged as important actors in fish value chains, they remain underrepresented in or excluded from formal governance processes and have limited say in decision-making. This lack of visibility also hinders women's equal access to needed extension services and assets, such as credit and technology. As part of the FAO-NORAD project “Empowering women in small-scale fisheries for sustainable food systems”, the decision was made to focus on strengthening women's roles in small-scale fisheries value chains as a means to increase the quantity and quality of small fish for human consumption and trade. In addition to the focus on food security and nutrition, the project aimed to help women both individually and as members of small businesses, professional organizations and cooperatives to build and improve their skills and capacity to do their work. To attain these goals, it was determined that a baseline empirical assessment of the current landscape of organizations and their primary characteristics, capacities and needs was needed as a first step.

The focus on gender equality and women's fishing organizations in the FAO-NORAD project is in line with the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). Gender equity and equality are core objectives and guiding principles of the SSF Guidelines. An entire thematic chapter (Chapter 8) is dedicated to this goal, as it outlines the right to organize and the need to support women's fishing organizations as a means to enhance women's access to and participation in governance, and to strengthen their position within fish value chains. This chapter also foregrounds the need for alternative evaluation systems, measures, and technologies appropriate to women's work in fisheries.

Through the FAO-NORAD project, survey data was used to “map” women's organizations and assess their present capacities and needs in the small-scale fisheries sector. Data collection for this study (herein referred to as the Women's SSF Mapping Assessment) focused on four districts: Buikwe along Lake Albert, and Mukono, Masaka and Buliisa districts in Lake Victoria, while the River Nile was mentioned by some respondents as it is a fisheries resource which crosses through some target areas. Across these four districts, a total of 49 surveys were collected between 27 August and 6 September 2020 (for a full overview of the study methods, see Appendix 1). The results of this study and related recommendations for capacity enhancement activities were later validated at a workshop held 23–25 March 2021, by representatives from the central government (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries – MAAIF), district-level officials, extension officers, and women from the small-scale fisheries sector. The workshop, which was presided over by the Commissioner for Resource Management, was attended by 40 participants. Their feedback on proposed capacity enhancement activities is reflected in this report.





# Part A: Summary of present capacities and opportunities to strengthen women's small-scale fisheries organizations in Uganda

## Overview of present organizational characteristics

Women's small-scale fisheries organizations in Uganda are active throughout the small-scale fisheries value chain, with group members often engaged in a combination of harvesting, processing and trade of a variety of fish and fish products. Groups typically were formed on their own initiative, without outside assistance, but the groups themselves take different organizational forms (e.g. community-based organizations [CBOs], associations, savings groups). Groups have been established for an average of 5 years and share common motivations and goals, including providing social support to members, opportunities to save money and expand capital, and opportunities to learn new skills. Most groups are interested in growing and gaining new members and also in joining higher-level groups, like a national platform or umbrella association.

## Current strengths, capacity gaps and opportunities to strengthen women's small-scale fisheries organizations

**STRENGTHS:** Groups are formally registered with the government and have basic administrative structures and internal rules in place governing their day-to-day operations. Internal rule-making is democratic, and group leadership changes over regularly. Groups also report having good financial transparency and information sharing practices. Membership is active in most groups, with members attending meetings, contributing to the group, and performing collective work. Many groups are engaged in harvesting (in addition to post-harvest processing) and have access to some fishing equipment or boats as well as secure workspaces. Most groups have received some form of technical training and report high rates of successful application of the knowledge learned.

**CAPACITY GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES:** Notwithstanding their strengths, women's small-scale fisheries groups in Uganda experience many internal and external barriers which limit their ability to realize their intended goals. Few groups have received external financial assistance, which is one of their greatest needs (i.e. greater access to capital). While most groups have received some form of technical training, most still need further training on post-harvest processing and help with establishing market linkages to sell fish products. Moreover, groups also need further leadership training. Presently, access to technologies like raised drying racks and improved ovens is low, and consequently groups suffer from high post-harvest losses. These challenges point to new opportunities to intervene and strengthen groups' capacity to do their work, which are outlined in the next section.

## Proposed interventions to enhance the capacity of women's small-scale fisheries groups

In this section, we outline six multi-part interventions to strengthen women's small-scale fisheries groups in Uganda. These proposed interventions were developed based on analysis of the empirical survey results (presented in full in Part B) from the Women's SSF Mapping Assessment. Once developed, the recommendations were shared with stakeholders and women from the small-scale fisheries sector in Uganda at a workshop for validation: workshop participants provided their

feedback on each activity, indicated its priority level, and suggested key partners. The proposed interventions presented below reflect their feedback.

**1) Improve access to external financial support.**

- a. Provide access to **soft loans and grants** for groups to improve the sustainability of their businesses and meet their needs.
  - i. *Feedback:* Preferably, this should be a revolving fund earmarked for sustainability initiatives, and should not be restricted to or solely targeted at the purchase of equipment. In addition to external financial sources, enhancing the availability of capital generated internally through member contributions is important.
  - ii. *Priority level:* High.
  - iii. *Partnerships:* Development partners, government
- b. Help groups **identify other sources of external financial support** through non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, microfinance institutions and other development partners.
  - i. *Feedback:* Groups need capacity building on resource mobilization and management; linking groups with other development partners can avoid duplication of effort. Groups should also be linked with existing government programmes (e.g. The Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme [UWEP], private sector and others), and provided assistance with advocacy and lobbying.
  - ii. *Priority level:* High
  - iii. *Partnerships:* Government, private sector
- c. Help groups **establish their own bank accounts and generate their own capital through member contributions.**
  - i. *Feedback:* Establish best practice guidelines for forming organizations, which should include opening a bank account. Help raise awareness about the benefits of formal accounting.
  - ii. *Priority level:* Medium (many groups have them already)
  - iii. *Partnerships:* Government, civil society organizations, banking institutions

**2) Improve access to needed technologies.**

- a. **Access to equipment** including raised drying racks, cold storage, dry storage, improved ovens, post-harvest equipment, engines and fishing gear could be enhanced through better access to grants, subsidies and soft loans. Alternatively, centres could be created where access to some of these technologies is made accessible to multiple groups.
  - i. *Feedback:* Provide awareness raising to communities so they can adopt appropriate technologies suited to their needs. Groups could consider hiring out equipment to aide in increasing their sustainability (e.g. providing it either to members at no fee, or at a lower fee to members and a higher fee to non-members). This could also encourage more members to join the association.
  - ii. *Priority level:* High
  - iii. *Partnerships:* Development partners, academia, research institutions, government

- 3) **Provide training on post-harvest processing and marketing.**
- a. **Training on post-harvest processing** (value addition, food handling, use of improved technologies) and strategies to reduce post-harvest losses are needed.
    - i. *Feedback:* Hands-on practical training should be provided, along with awareness raising and learning exchange visits.
    - ii. *Priority level:* High
    - iii. *Partnerships:* Fisheries Training Institute, civil society organizations, government (e.g. Directorate of Fisheries Resources)
  - b. **Training on business management and marketing** is needed, coupled with assistance in accessing formal market spaces.
    - i. *Feedback:* Training should focus on developing group branding and packaging, certification, processing, business planning/competitiveness, promotions, and product quality and standards.
    - ii. *Priority level:* High
    - iii. *Partnerships:* Government, civil society organizations, women's small-scale fisheries associations, banking institutions, Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS), Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), Uganda Export Promotions Board (UEPB)
- 4) **Enhance connectivity among local groups and link them to higher-level groups.**
- a. **Facilitate learning exchanges** among groups (especially between younger groups and more established groups) so they can learn directly from each other.
    - i. *Feedback:* Selection of more established groups for learning exchanges will depend on availability of good post-harvest practices and infrastructure (provided by a regional study through this project).
    - ii. *Priority level:* High
    - iii. *Partnerships:* Women's fishing organizations (Uganda National Women's Fish Organization and Federation of Fisheries Organizations of Uganda)
  - b. **Connect local-level groups to higher-level groups (e.g. county, district, national)** so that they can benefit from solidarity and from better access to information and services. Identify whether and how to strengthen existing national organizations (e.g. Uganda National Women's Fish Organization, Federation of Fisheries Organizations of Uganda) and raise awareness of the benefits of these groups and how to join.
    - i. *Feedback:* Engage with the African Women Network of Fish Processors and Traders (AWFishNET) for opportunities to learn from other countries on how to strengthen and build national networks that are downwardly accountable. This would also create linkages between Ugandan associations and regional and global processes and opportunities.
    - ii. *Priority level:* High
    - iii. *Partnerships:* Women's fishing organizations (Uganda National Women's Fish Organization and Federation of Fisheries Organizations of Uganda), government, AWFishNET

5) **Improve government communication with groups and extension support.**

- a. **Raise awareness** within different branches of the government about the **presence of different types of women's small-scale fisheries groups** (e.g. CBOs, savings groups, associations) and ensure they are **receiving government support through extension services**, especially **field visits and invitations to meetings and training events**.
  - i. *Feedback:* Enhance the capacity of extension service providers and incorporate their activities into project interventions. Hold regular stakeholder meetings (e.g. quarterly) to review progress.
  - ii. *Priority level:* High
  - iii. *Partnerships:* Local government, MAAIF
- b. **Improve market access through training, fostering linkages to new markets, and information sharing** to help groups diversify their market outlets.
  - i. *Feedback:* Implement affirmative action policies and opportunities to strategically position women in lucrative fish trade markets.
  - ii. *Priority level:* High
  - iii. *Partnerships:* Local government, civil society organizations, women's associations

6) **Other needs:**

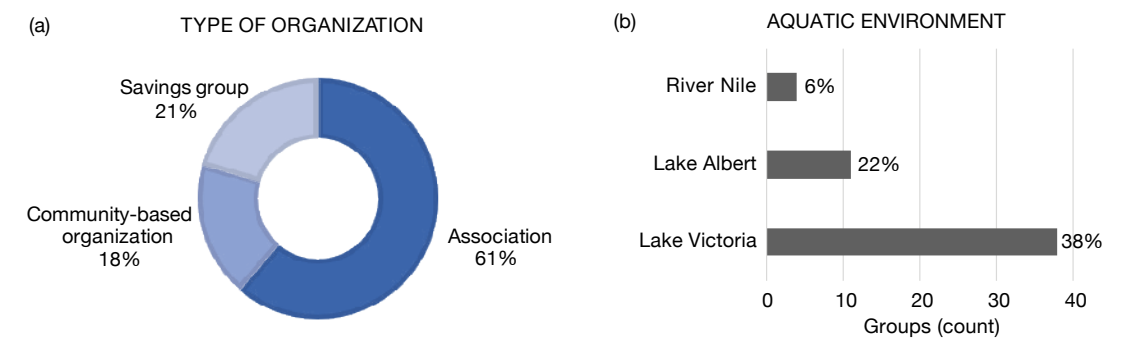
- a. **Leadership training** is needed on how to identify short-, medium- and long-term plans and motivate groups to meet their goals.
  - i. *Feedback:* "Exposure trips" and learning exchanges can support peer learning and connect existing leaders or inspire new leaders.
  - ii. *Priority level:* High
  - iii. *Partnerships:* Government, women's associations, banking institutions
- b. CBOs need assistance **addressing low rates of member participation** through team-building exercises and group governance training, which will enhance present levels of transparency and increase trust.
  - i. *Feedback:* Work on clarity of group goals through capacity and team building, and through increased transparency (communication between leadership and members).
  - ii. *Priority level:* High
  - iii. *Partnerships:* Government

# Part B: Results of the Women’s SSF Mapping Assessment Survey in Uganda

## Group location and structure

Most women’s small-scale fisheries organizations operate at the village level (78 percent), with some operating at the subcounty or traditional authority level (12 percent) or district level (10 percent). Organizations take a variety of forms (Figure 1a), including associations (61 percent), savings groups (20 percent) and CBOs (18 percent). Most of these groups operate in Lake Victoria (78 percent) while 22 percent operate in Lake Albert and 6 percent also operate in the River Nile (see Figure 1b). Nearly all groups (94 percent) are formally registered at their Community Development Office. All have an executive committee and a constitution or by-laws, and keep meeting records or minutes; nearly all have an updated membership list (98 percent) as well. However, bank accounts are a less common feature of groups (only 55 percent). **Groups are registered and have basic administrative structures in place, but some still need help establishing bank accounts.**

Figure 1. Types of organizations that represent women in fisheries



## Group age and stage of activity

Women’s small-scale fisheries groups in Uganda vary in age, ranging from newly formed to a maximum of 24 years old. Average group age is 5.5 years and the average time between formation and formalization (e.g. becoming registered) is a little over 2 years. Most groups were formed on their own initiative (e.g. were self-formed – Figure 2), initially by a group of like-minded community members (78 percent) or by an individual community member (20 percent). Very few groups were formed through outside assistance, but examples include groups formed by their district government (6 percent), development projects (4 percent) or NGOs (4 percent). Across groups, common objectives include improving their members’ household income (98 percent), collectively saving money and pooling capital (69 percent), expanding trade and market access (65 percent), and learning new skills (53 percent), among others (Table 1). Nearly all groups (94 percent) see themselves as somewhat successful at meeting their objectives (Figure 3a). Most groups are still focused on meeting their primary objectives (74 percent), while some (16 percent) are focused on meeting new or secondary objectives (Figure 3b). **Generally, women’s small-scale fisheries groups in Uganda have been successfully formed and registered but are still relatively young organizations that are mainly focused on achieving their primary objectives. It is a positive sign that none of the groups characterized themselves as “inactive”, and all indicated they had made at least some**

progress towards their goals. Still, most groups see their progress towards meeting their objectives as “somewhat successful”. Thus, many groups would benefit from leadership training to help develop short-, medium- and long-term plans that align with their primary and secondary objectives, so they can continue making progress towards their goals and adapt as their needs change.

Figure 2. Different actors who initiated group formation

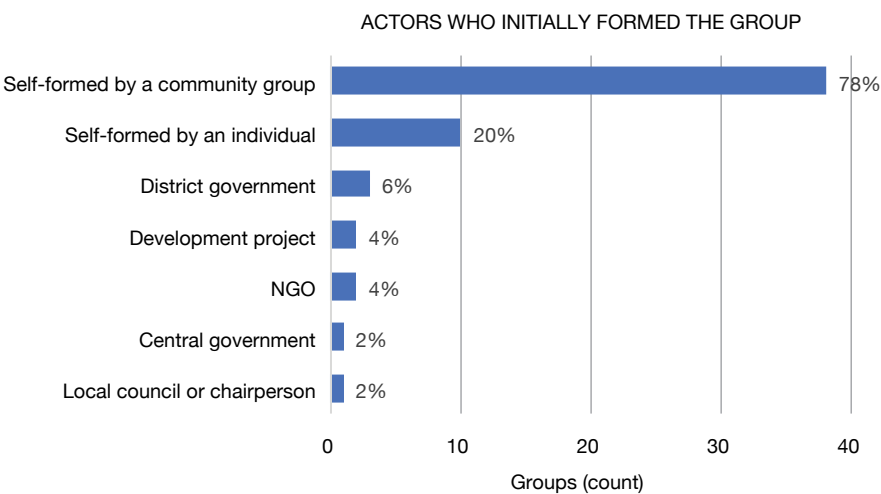
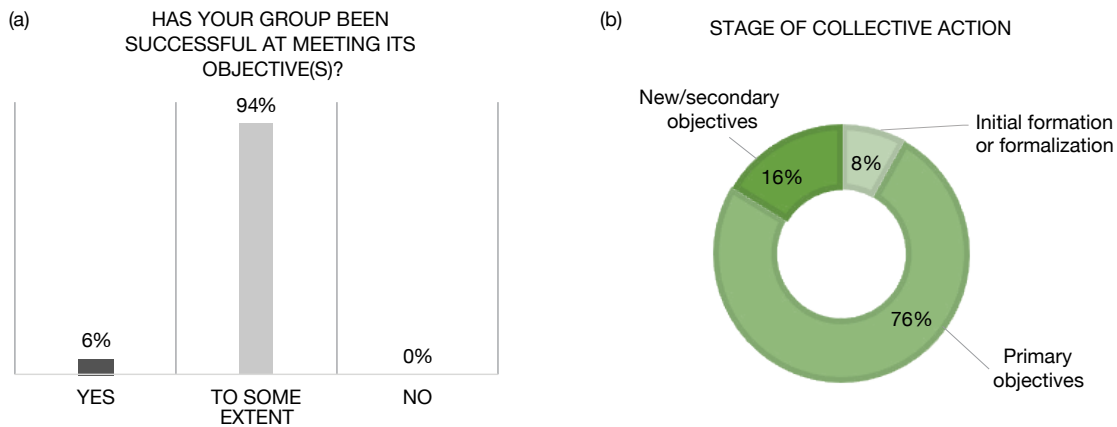


Table 1. Groups’ main purpose or objectives

| Main purpose/objective                       | Number of groups | Percent (%) |
|--|------------------|-------------|
| Improving household income                   | 48               | 98          |
| Collective savings                           | 34               | 69          |
| Expanding trade and market access            | 32               | 65          |
| Learning new skills                          | 26               | 53          |
| Access to fish                               | 21               | 43          |
| Access to external financial support         | 21               | 43          |
| Greater visibility to the government         | 19               | 39          |
| Social welfare                               | 15               | 31          |
| Access to workspace                          | 15               | 31          |
| Participation in formal fisheries management | 13               | 27          |

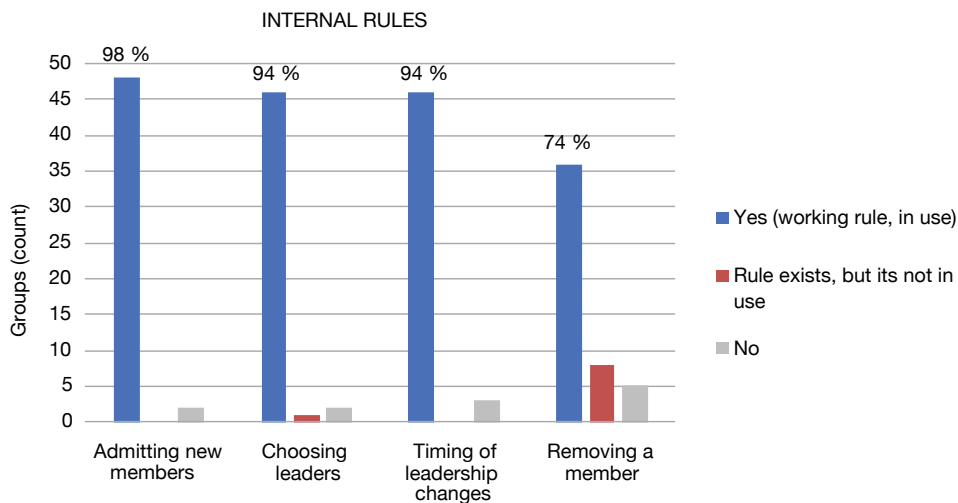
Figure 3. Groups’ perceptions of their success at meeting their objectives (a) and the primary stage of collective action they are focused on (b). For part b, none of the groups described themselves as “inactive”



Rules

Nearly all groups have functional, internal rules governing their day-to-day operations, including admitting new members (98 percent), choosing leaders (94 percent), and the timing of leadership changes (94 percent); three-quarters of groups also have a rule for removing a member if needed (Figure 4). Group leadership changeovers occur regularly, typically every 1 to 3 years. Almost all groups (94 percent) reported that all members (executive and regular members) participate in creating their group’s internal rules, while 6 percent said only executive committee members make rules. Membership dues are typically paid either always or most of the time (63 percent and 20 percent of groups, respectively), while a handful of groups (n = 5) have members who only pay their dues half of the time or less. CBOs have slightly lower rates of payment among members (only 50 percent paying always or most of the time). There appears to be democratic rule-making and regular leadership changeovers, and there is good compliance with membership dues or fees. However, CBOs with slightly lower rates of payment of dues could use targeted support to strengthen their operations and member participation.

Figure 4. Presence of different types of internal rules and their functional status



## Group characteristics: size, gender and participation

Currently, average group size is 33 members, and groups have grown over time on average from their initial size (average of 21 members). Most groups are mixed-gender groups (86 percent); the average gender composition across all groups is 71 percent women. Of these groups, the majority (62 percent) do not report an internal gendered division of labour, but some do report a division where men harvest and women focus on post-harvest processing tasks. Most groups (85 percent) are interested in growing and adding new members, and indicate that they are able to do so. Those who do not wish to grow say they are already at their desired group size. Member participation is high on average (74 percent, with a median of 80 percent) across all groups, but a handful of groups (n = 10) experience issues with low rates of participation (ranging from only 30 to 60 percent). **Currently, groups report strong member participation rates overall, and most groups want to and are able to grow and add new members as desired. However, some groups with lower rates of member participation could use targeted support to increase participation, commitment and accountability.**

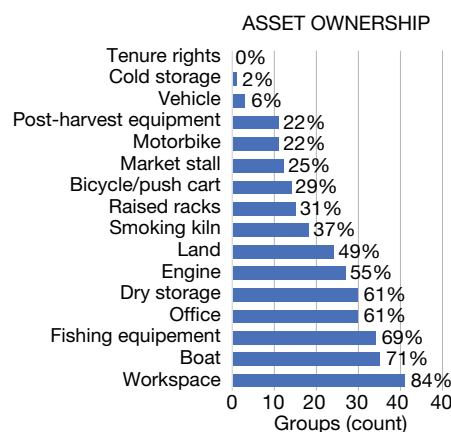
## Internal communication and meetings

Strong internal communication and information sharing was reported among groups. In most groups, information is shared “always” (80 percent) or “most of the time” (18 percent) among members, and information is accessible to all or most members. Nearly all groups hold regular meetings to work together (average of 15 days a month), regular planned meetings (average of twice a month), and general assembly meetings (average of 1–3 times a year). **Information sharing and accessibility of information is strong in women’s small-scale fisheries groups at present, with groups meeting regularly to work together, discuss their business, and hold general assembly meetings.**

## Assets

Most groups have access to a secure workspace (84 percent), a fishing boat (71 percent), fishing equipment (69 percent), an office (61 percent), dry storage space (61 percent), an engine (55 percent), and land (49 percent) for their fishery activities (Figure 5). **Access to other assets such as cold storage, raised drying racks, other post-harvest equipment, a smoking kiln, and market stalls is low, and could be enhanced either through financial support (grants, loans, in-kind support) or communal spaces made available for groups to access some of these assets on a rotating or shared basis. Notably, groups typically do have access to boats and fishing equipment and are active in harvesting fish.**

Figure 5. **Most common assets that groups have access to for their small-scale fisheries activities**

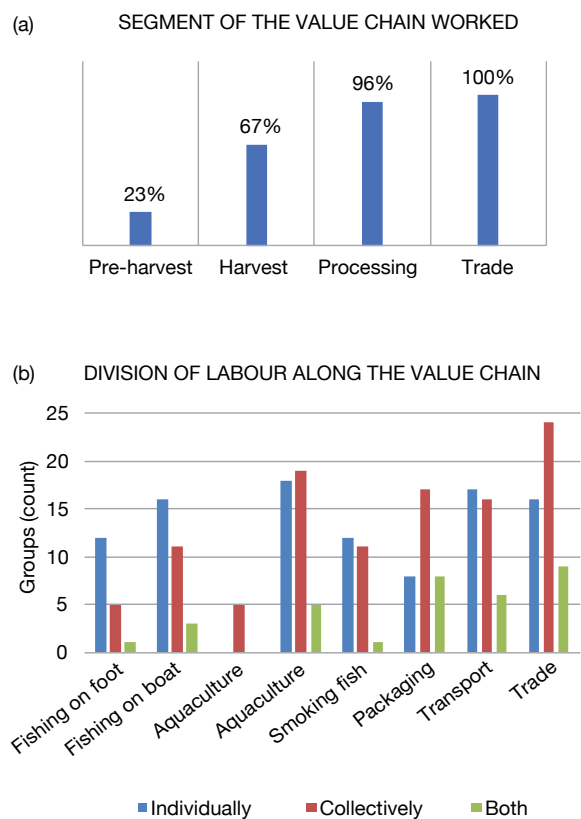




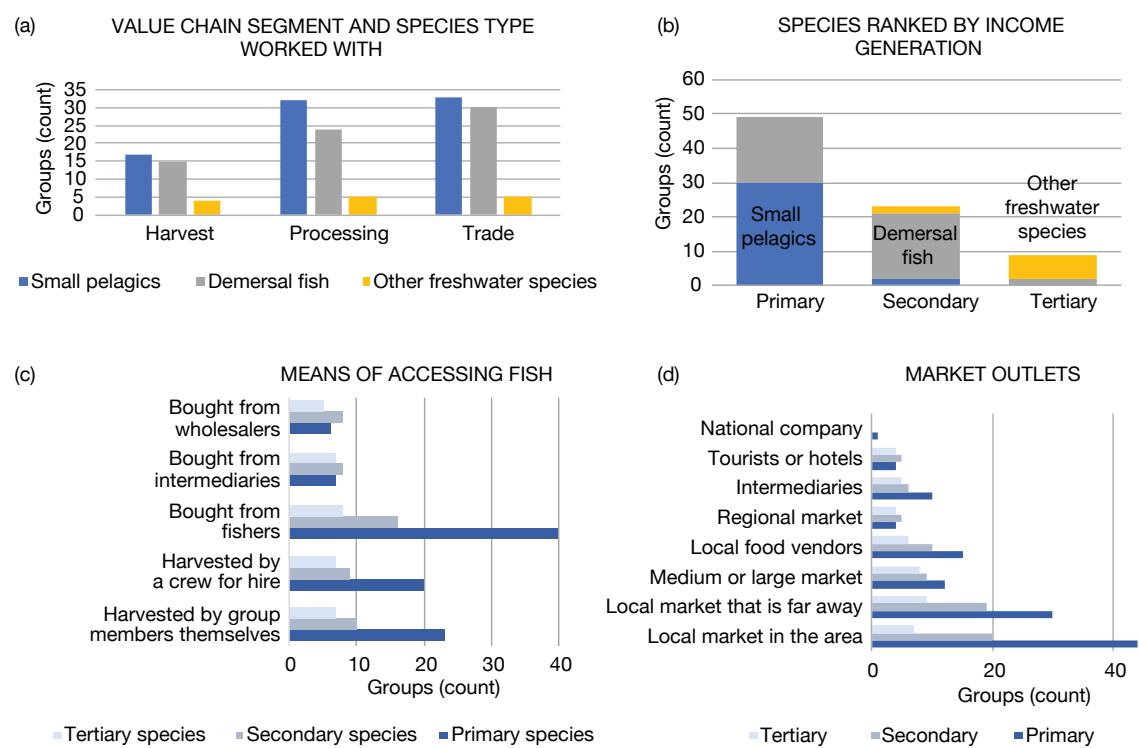
# Value chain activities

All groups trade fish products and nearly all process fish into a variety of products (96 percent). Most groups also harvest fish (67 percent) while some engage in pre-harvest activities (23 percent – Figure 6a). Groups conduct their work at each step along the value chain in a variety of ways, performing tasks either individually, collectively, or both (Figure 6b). The most common fisheries-related tasks that groups conduct collectively are packaging and trade. Small pelagics and demersal fish are the most common species type that groups work with throughout the value chain (Figure 7a, 7b). Small pelagics are the primary source of income for most, although demersal fish are also important primary sources of income and are the most common secondary source of group income (Figure 7b). Groups typically access fish by buying directly from fishers, harvesting it themselves, or harvesting with a crew they hire (Figure 7c). Outlets for selling fish are dominated by local markets in the area, local markets that are far away (more than 2 hours travel), local food vendors, and medium or large national markets (Figure 7d). **Women’s small-scale fisheries groups are engaged in a range of value chain activities involving a variety of species (primarily small pelagics and demersal fish), and trade their fish and fish products through a variety of market outlets.**

Figure 6. Different stages of the small-scale fisheries value chain groups are engaged in (a) and how they divide their labour (individually, collectively, or both) for each task (b)



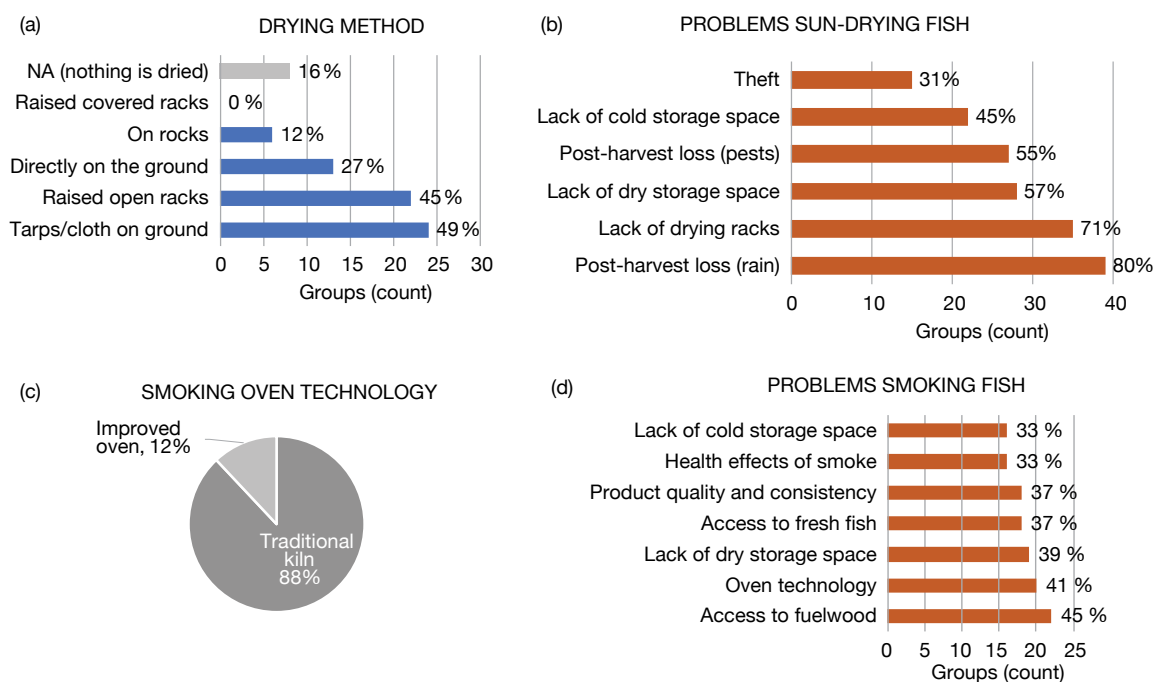
**Figure 7.** Different stages of the value chain groups are involved in and the main species they work with (a); the importance of each species to overall group income (b); how groups access fish (c); market outlets for selling fish (d). In charts b–d, “primary, secondary and tertiary” refer to the three most important species types that groups work with, according to their own ranking



## Post-harvest processing

In post-harvest processing, most groups sun-dry fish on tarps (49 percent), on raised open racks (45 percent) or directly on the ground (27 percent – Figure 8a). All groups reported problems related to sun-drying fish, with the most common being post-harvest loss due to rain (80 percent), inadequate access to raised drying racks (71 percent) and dry storage space (57 percent), and post-harvest loss from pests (55 percent), among others (Figure 8b). Not all groups smoke fish (22 percent do not), but those who do rely mostly on traditional kilns (88 percent – Figure 8c). All groups who smoke fish experience problems, the most common being access to fuelwood (45 percent) and lack of access to improved ovens (41 percent) and dry storage space (39 percent), followed by consistency of product quality (37 percent), lack of access to fresh fish (37 percent) and cold storage space (33 percent), and the negative health effects of smoke (33 percent – Figure 8d). **Access to technologies, especially raised drying racks and improved ovens, could help address issues concerning post-harvest losses, theft and fuel (e.g. both accessing and relying upon fuelwood). Dry and cold storage space is an issue that could be addressed through access to external financial support. Groups also need training to improve their product quality and consistency when smoking fish, and in using improved oven technologies with better ventilation.**

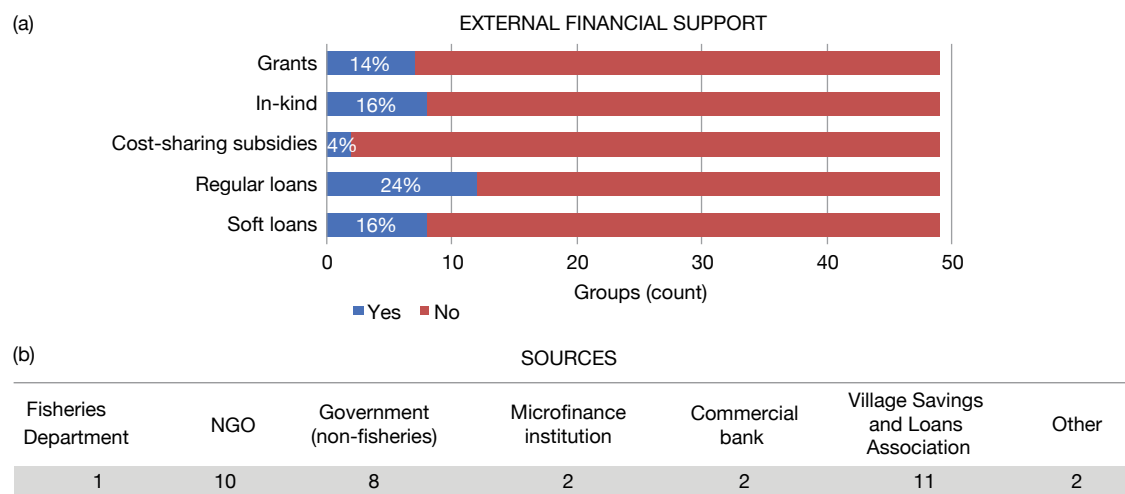
**Figure 8. Technologies used and problems experiences when sun-drying (a, b) and smoking fish (c, d)**



## Finances

Groups vary in how they allocate their profits from their fishery activities. The most common method is to keep all profits in the group account for collective expenses or redistribution to members through loans or dividends later (61 percent of groups), followed by having members make regular contributions (e.g. dues, fees, or a percentage of sales) to the group account (22 percent of groups), or letting members keep their profits from the sale of fishery activities but having them contribute to the group account as needed (14 percent of groups). Most groups have at least two sources of income, the most common being regular member contributions (60 percent), members making financial contributions as needed (57 percent), collective sale of fishery products (53 percent), and other non-fishery related income-earning activities (37 percent). Few groups have received external financial support in the last five years; only 14 percent reported receiving any type of external financial support. The most common forms of external financial support received are regular loans (Figure 9a) and the most common sources of support (aggregated across all types) come from Village Savings and Loans Associations or NGOs (Figure 9b). When asked about their degree of financial dependence and sufficiency as a group, one-half (51 percent) said they were somewhat financially independent while only 29 percent said they were fully financially independent and self-sufficient. All groups make their financial records available to regular members to review. **Given the young age of groups and low propensity for receiving outside financial support, better access to external forms of financial support would help groups become more firmly established and accomplish their goals.** Currently, Village Savings and Loans Associations are important sources of support to women's small-scale fisheries groups.

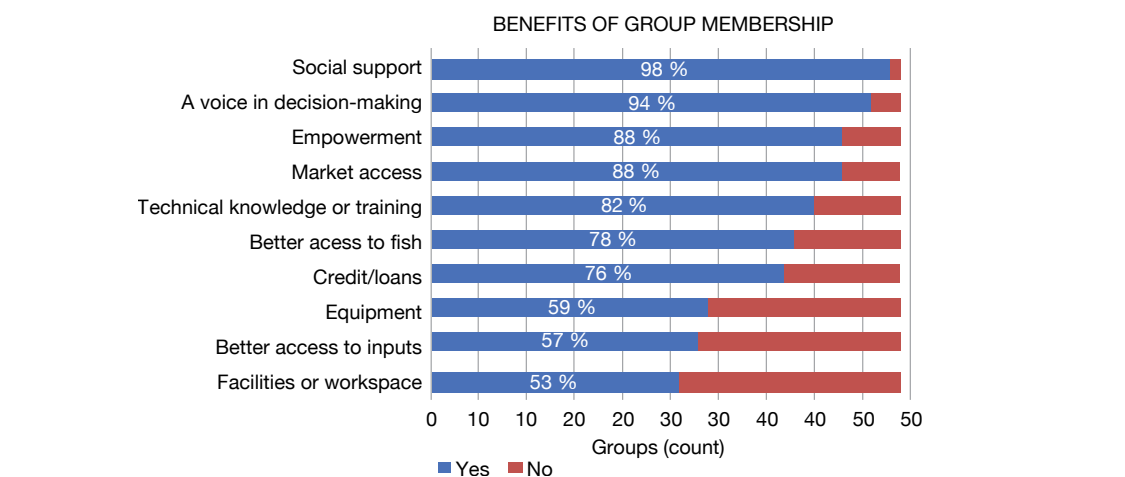
Figure 9. The different types (a) and sources (b) of external financial support groups have received in the last five years



Membership benefits, group strengths and barriers

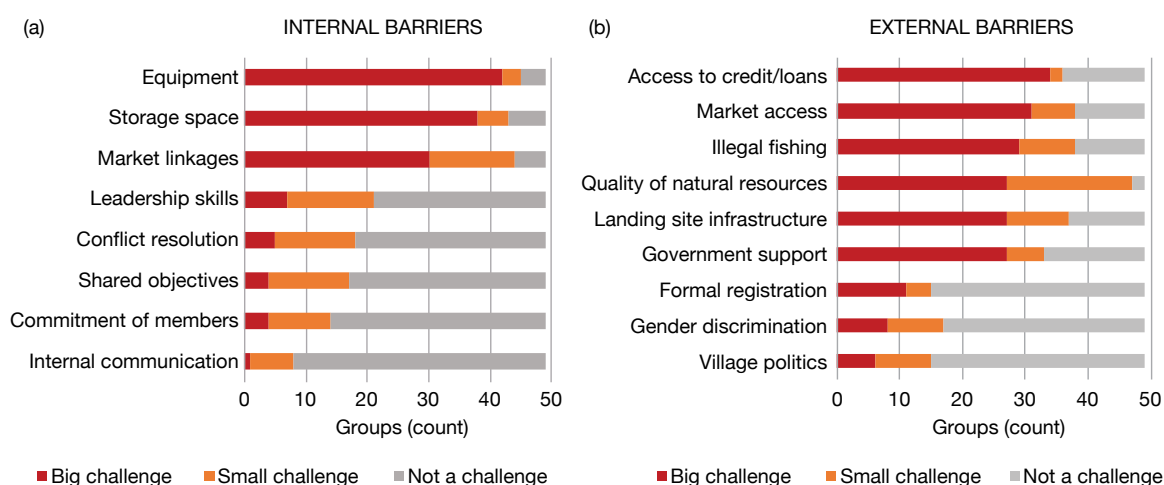
Group members receive a variety of types of benefits through their membership in their organization including social support (98 percent), a voice to engage in decision-making (94 percent), better market access (88 percent), empowerment (88 percent), technical knowledge or training (82 percent), better access to fish (76 percent), and access to individual loans or credit from the group (76 percent), among others (Figure 10). The main group strengths reported by members include improved livelihoods and alternative livelihood skills for their members, the ability of members to pay their children’s school fees, good teamwork, trust and transparency, good collective saving habits, and improved product quality. Groups’ main achievements include the purchase of equipment (boats, fishing nets, processing equipment, motorbikes or trucks) for their fishing business, supporting community projects (hygiene and sanitation at landing sites, tents and furniture for meetings), expanding their membership, establishing fish ponds and cages or other alternative livelihood projects (piggery, making soap), and improved post-harvest processing skills.

Figure 10. Benefits of group membership. Percentages indicate the proportion of groups that report this type of benefit among their members



The most common internal barriers that limit groups' capacity to do their work are lack of access to needed equipment, storage space, and market linkages (Figure 11a). Other internal barriers related to internal group dynamics (leadership, conflict resolution, shared objectives, etc.) were not often characterized as "big challenges", but rather were either "small challenges" or not considered a challenge. Groups experience many significant external barriers as either "big" or "small" challenges, the most common being lack of external financial support (e.g. credit, loans), lack of access to formal market spaces, illegal fishing, quality of natural resources, poor landing site infrastructure, and inadequate government support (Figure 11b). Groups report no significant problems with most internal dynamics (e.g. shared objectives, internal communication, member commitment); their main internal barriers are technical, which could be addressed through improved access to equipment (e.g. raised drying racks, ovens) and storage space, and through the creation of market linkages or better access to market information. Many of the external barriers experienced are larger problems, but groups would still be strengthened by improved access to credit or loans, more consistent government support, and assistance with barriers to market access.

**Figure 11. Internal (a) and external barriers(b) that limit groups' capacity**

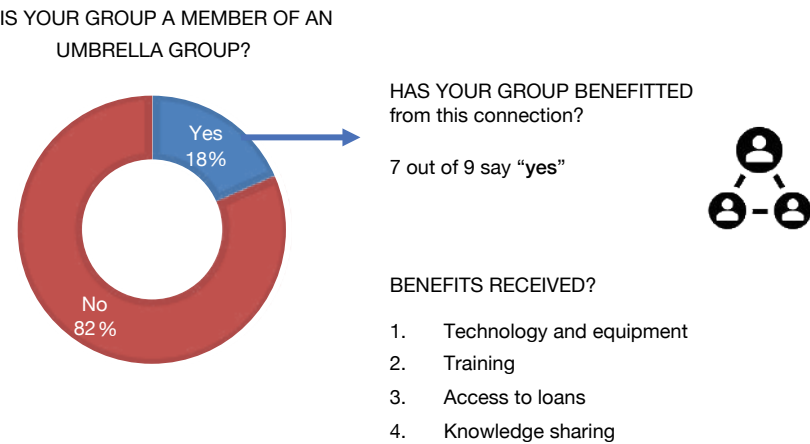


## External linkages

Most groups (82 percent) are not currently a member of a higher-level group (Figure 12). A handful of groups (18 percent) are members of national groups (i.e. Uganda National Women's Fish Organization or Federation of Fisheries Organizations of Uganda) or district- or county-level groups (Katosi Women's Development Trust, Myooga National Organization, and Kisakye Women's Group). Most believe they have benefitted from their membership in these higher-level groups through access to technology or equipment, training (e.g. environmental management, value addition), access to loans, and knowledge sharing. Of the groups that are not already connected to a higher-level group, most (75 percent) indicated that they wish to join a higher-level group and believe they would benefit from this affiliation. Connectivity among women's small-scale fisheries groups is mixed at present: about one-half of groups are in regular contact with other women's groups and have participated in a learning exchange with them as well. **There is an opportunity to strengthen linkages among women's small-scale fisheries groups through learning exchanges, enhancing opportunities and means for communication among groups, and (for those who are interested) enhancing opportunities to join higher-level groups. Connecting women's small-scale fisheries groups to higher-level groups at the county, district and national levels would help with access to training, equipment, financial**

assistance and information. Given that few groups are members of national groups, there is also an opportunity to strengthen national umbrella organizations and provide information and opportunities for existing village-level groups to join these higher-level groups.

Figure 12. Membership in higher-level umbrella groups and perceived benefits



## Participation in fisheries governance and access to extension services

The most common fisheries governance activities groups have participated in are formal fisheries consultation processes (e.g. review of a law or regulation – 41 percent), followed by studies of alternative processing methods (37 percent) or studies of alternative fishing methods (31 percent – Figure 13). About one-third of groups have not participated in any formal fisheries governance activity. Most groups receive regular or less regular technical outreach support from the government through phone contact, field visits, or invitations to government meetings or training events (Figure 14a). Groups reported that they prefer to receive technical outreach support from their government through field visits and invitations to meetings and training events – not through phone calls (Figure 14b). Currently, only 22 percent (n = 11) of groups provide annual reports of their activities to the government. **There is an opportunity to increase the frequency of technical outreach and extension services provided by the government to women’s small-scale fisheries groups so that contact occurs on a more regular basis (e.g. at least seasonally), particularly through regular field visits and invitations to meetings and training events.** By increasing regular government contact and opportunities for inclusion in formal fisheries governance activities, the government could also encourage or require that groups provide annual progress reports (either in writing or verbally at review meetings) to create two-way accountability and transparency.

Figure 13. Rates of group participation in different types of formal fisheries governance activities

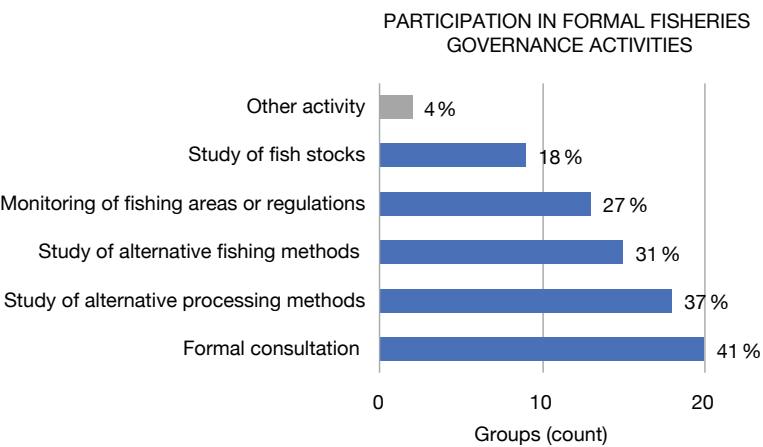
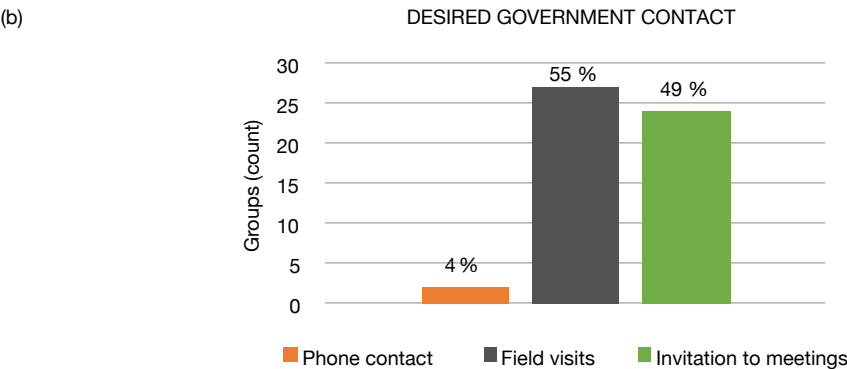
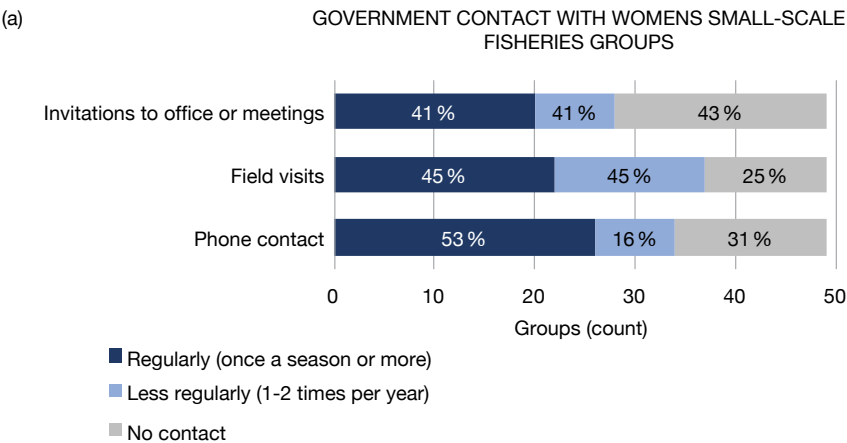


Figure 14. Current method and frequency of government outreach services (e.g. technical support and extension services) to groups (a) and desired mode of contact to receive government support in the future (b)



# Training

Two-thirds of groups have received some form of technical training in the last 5 years (63 percent – Figure 15a), the most common being training on financial management, post-harvest processing, and marketing (Figure 15b). Across all types of training, about two-thirds of groups reported that they had successfully been able to apply what they learned in training and put their new knowledge into practice. The most common reasons reported for being unable to apply knowledge from training were a lack of needed equipment such as improved drying racks (for processing-related training); the financial hardships and disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (for financial management training); cultural barriers to changing attitudes (for gender training); and failure of tree planting initiatives due to termites and lack of rain (for environmental training). Administrative training was the type most successfully applied (94 percent of groups), followed by processing training (74 percent) and financial management training (73 percent – Figure 16). The most common institutions providing technical training are the Fisheries Department (34 percent of all training received), NGOs (31 percent) and the government (non-fisheries – 27 percent), although the most common institution varies by the type of training (see Figure 15b). Groups have been relatively successful in applying the knowledge from training; where they did not succeed, the barriers to applying that knowledge were largely out their control. Providing further training will help supply groups with new knowledge and tools to enhance their capacities, which they have demonstrated they are able to successfully assimilate. Coordination (e.g. by the government or a national umbrella group) is required to avoid duplicating efforts between different actors, and to ensure that the types of training that are most needed are provided. Also, training should include support for accessing needed equipment (like raised drying racks) to enhance groups’ success in applying new knowledge.

Figure 15. Different types of training groups have received and the main training providers

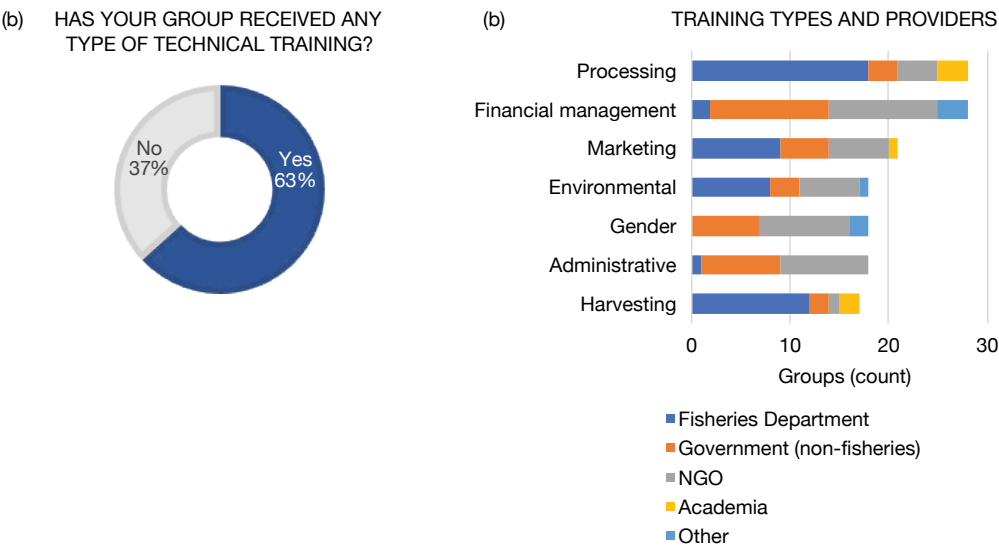
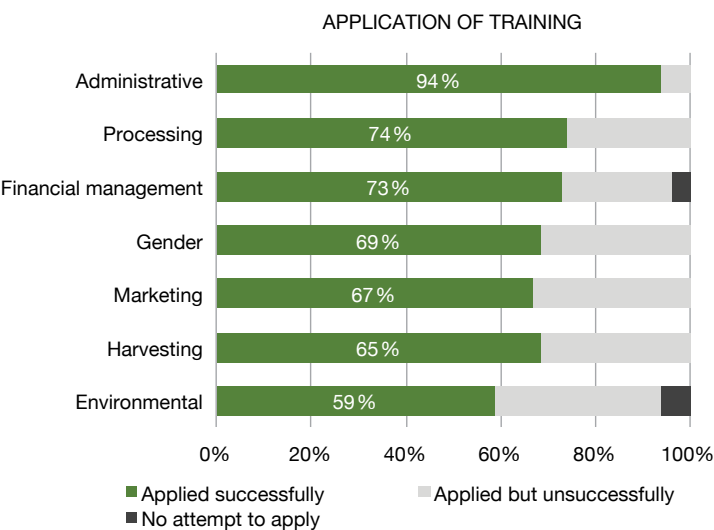




Figure 16. Groups' success in applying knowledge from the different types of training they have received



## Greatest needs

Groups provided a variety of answers as to the greatest needs for strengthening their organizations, the most common being access to financial support (particularly soft loans and grants), access to fishing equipment (boats, engines, nets, etc.), access to improved post-harvest processing equipment (raised drying racks), and training on processing (e.g. value addition, fish handling, use of improved equipment). Some also indicated that training on financial management and better access to markets (through training and assistance in accessing formal markets) would help their business. **Great opportunities for strengthening group capacity include improving access to grants and soft loans, providing assistance in procuring fishing equipment and raised drying racks, and providing post-harvest processing training.**



# Appendix 1. Methods

## Background data collection

Prior to implementing the Women's SSF Mapping Assessment, background data was first collected. To estimate the number of women's small-scale fisheries groups in each district, District Fisheries Officers (DFOs) were asked to estimate the number and types of groups present (that met the inclusion criteria below) in select districts through a combination of landing site visits, expert knowledge, and existing reports and information. Based on these estimates for each district, a sampling protocol was then applied (see below) to create the target sample size (see Table 2).

**Inclusion criteria.** To be included in the sample population for the survey, groups or organizations had to meet the following criteria:

- The group identifies as an organization, either formally registered or informal.
- Membership is majority (more than 50 percent) women.
- Women are an active part of the organization's leadership.
- The majority of group members are engaged in capture fishing and related activities including pre-harvest, processing, and trade of fish or fish products.

**Table 2. Results from background district-level questionnaire and sampling targets for each district in Uganda**

| District | Aquatic resource | Total landing sites | Types of groups present   | Number of savings groups (e.g. SACCOS) | Number of other groups | Total estimated number of groups | Number of groups to be surveyed | Surveys collected |
|----------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--|------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Masaka   | Lake Victoria    | 8                   | CBOs, SACCOS              | 11                                     | 24                     | 35                               | 11                              | 13                |
| Buikwe   | Lake Victoria    | 52                  | CBOs                      | 16                                     | 20                     | 36                               | 11                              | 12                |
| Buliisa  | Lake Albert      | 9                   | Association, CBOs, SACCOS | 13                                     | 5                      | 18                               | 8                               | 11                |
| Mukono   | Lake Victoria    | 49                  | Association, CBOs         | 14                                     | 27                     | 41                               | 13                              | 13                |

**Sampling protocol.** The following sampling protocol was applied to the estimated number of women's small-scale fisheries groups (always rounding up to a whole number):

- Fewer than 7 organizations: do not sample (i.e. survey all groups);
- 8–10 organizations: sample 60 percent;
- 11–14 organizations: sample 50 percent;
- 15–20 organizations: sample 40 percent;
- More than 20 organizations: sample 30 percent where possible, 20 percent as needed.

## Training

Training for data collection was led by the National Project Coordinator and held in person in each district with teams of locally recruited enumerators. The one-day training covered the purpose and scope of the study, the survey questions, and how to arrange for and facilitate surveys. All enumerators were present for an in-person, one-day training before collecting data. A separate person was later recruited and trained on data entry.

## Survey data collection

Surveys were administered with 2–3 group members present, including both executive committee members and regular members, and two members of the data collection team (one asking the questions, the other recording responses with a pen and paper). Group members answered questions from the structured questionnaire collectively, responding as to their group-level (i.e. not individual) characteristics only. Each survey took 1–2 hours to complete and was administered outdoors to allow for social distancing. Respondents were introduced to the purpose of the survey and asked to give their consent before proceeding; they were also informed of their right to skip any question or end the interview at any time.

## Survey instrument

The survey included informed consent language. After consent was granted, enumerators guided participants through questions about their group's history and formation, their objectives, their internal operations (e.g. rules, information sharing, meetings, participation rates, financial structure), external support received, external linkages, barriers, and their greatest needs. To review the survey's development and the survey instrument in full see the FAO report *A Methodological Guide for Mapping Women's Small-Scale Fishery Organizations to Assess their Capacities and Needs*.



Globally, women perform essential work throughout small-scale fisheries (SSF) food systems, yet much of this work is overlooked. Where women are not seen or acknowledged as important actors in fish value chains, they remain underrepresented in or excluded from formal governance processes and have limited say in decision-making. This lack of visibility hinders women's equal access to needed extension services and assets, such as credit and technology. Forming organizations (e.g., associations, cooperatives, savings, and credit groups) is one means of adapting to gender-specific challenges women face in the sector. Recent high-level commitments outline achieving women's full and effective participation in decision-making and leadership as global governance goals. For example, the dedicated chapter on gender in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) encourages women's participation in fisheries organizations and their inclusion in monitoring and implementation. In addition, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality includes a target on ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life. But while enhanced access to organizations and decision-making spaces for women is critical for achieving global goals, current research on women's SSF organizations is lacking, leaving gaps in our understanding of existing barriers and opportunities to affect change.

The report provides a national overview of women's SSF organizations, defined as formal and informal organizations engaged in fisheries activities (including pre-harvest, harvest, or post-harvest processing and trade) whose leaders and members are majority women. The study of women's SSF organizations was part of a broader initiative, "Empowering women in SSF for sustainable food systems," through funding provided by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). To support sustainable food systems and nutrition in sub-Saharan Africa, NORAD provided funding for initial project activities in five countries – Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. With a focus on strengthening women's roles in post-harvest processing and trade, the project aimed to help women both individually and as members of small businesses, professional organizations, and cooperatives to build and improve their skills and capacity to do their work. To attain these goals, an initial empirical assessment of the current landscape of organizations was undertaken as a first step. The report summarizes the results of the mapping assessment survey of women's SSF fisheries organizations carried out, and underscores the diversity of women's fisheries organizations and their present accomplishments and opportunities for governments, research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and private sector actors to support women's SSF organizations in line with the principles of the SSF Guidelines. For an overview of the methodology, see 'A methodological guide for mapping women's SSF organizations to assess their capacities and needs').

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